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Est. 2002

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Meet the team



Discovering Fossils is a non-commercial public resource dedicated to showcasing palaeontology. Written and designed by Roy Shepherd, scientific guidance by Robert Randell. ©2009

Fossil hunting guidelines



Hanover Point (Isle of Wight) fossils

Map and directions



Directions: Located in the south west of the Isle of Wight, Hanover Point is accessed via the A3055, just East of Brook. Parking is available overlooking the sea, from which a small path leads to the foreshore.



Location summary

Geological period

Cretaceous (Early epoch)

Approximate age

140 million years

Fossil diversity

Dinosaur footprints, plant remains...

Find frequency

Low

Dangers to consider

Falling rocks, rising tide...

Equipment needed

Hammer, chisel, eye protection...

Protection status

This location is designated a [SSSI](#)

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How might Hanover Point have looked 140 million years ago?



Introduction

The south coast of the Isle of Wight exposes rocks of the Wealden Group, deposited in a floodplain setting during the Early Cretaceous, 140 million years ago. This is the most productive region in Europe for discovering dinosaurs, and a wide range of fossil material has been found. In the Early Cretaceous this region had a monsoonal climate with long dry summers and flash floods. The floodplain drained to the south and preserved channels are sometimes found to contain log jams with associated bones.



Left: There are good parking facilities at Shippard's Chine, for the time being. **Right:** Steps lead from the car park to the beach.

Parking facilities are found at Shippard's chine, just west of Hanover Point on the coastal road from Freshwater. The Wealden Group contains many soft sand and clay units and the whole stretch of coast is prone to rapid erosion, hence the end of the car park is vanishing into the sea. The beach is accessed by

steps at the end of the car park, and a short walk east along the sandy beach leads to Hanover Point. Visitors should be aware of tide times and have suitable footwear if they intend to climb onto the rocky foreshore.

Where to look for fossils?

Dinosaur footprints are the most common fossils, and can be found loose on the beach as sandstone moulds, particularly at the base of the cliff. The rocky platform at Hanover Point contains footprints and a trackway exposed in situ on the bedding surfaces. Logs and fragments of fossil wood are also present and can be collected from the clay units where exposed. Dinosaur bones are very scarce but may be found among the concentrates of dense material which occur in patches on the beach at the base of the cliff.



Left: East from Shippard's Chine leads to Hanover Point. Dinosaur footprints can be found among the loose boulders.



Right: Dense objects such as fossil bone accumulate in patches on the beach at the base of the cliff.

For more information about the features and processes controlling coastal fossil collecting locations [click here](#).

What fossils might you find?

Dinosaur footprints are the most common fossils, most of which are large with three rounded toes and belong to the herbivorous *Iguanodon*. Much rarer prints, sometimes smaller and with narrow angular toes belong to the carnivorous Theropods. A trackway is exposed at Hanover Point, but highly irresponsible collectors have attempted to remove a print and evidently destroyed it in the process. Prints should not be collected, rather appreciated where and as they are.



Large moulds of *Iguanodon* footprints on the beach.



Very well preserved toes from incomplete footprints.

Remains of dinosaurs themselves are very scarce, though rolled bones may be picked up on the beach. Impressive articulated remains have been found by very fortunate collectors. Other Wealden vertebrates include fish, crocodiles and pterosaurs. Fragmentary wood is very common and amber may also be collected on rare occasions.



Left: Large *Iguanodon* footprint; part of a trackway **Right:** which runs across the rocks at Hanover Point.



Possible Theropod (carnivore) footprints in the rocks at Hanover Point.



Left: Possible Sauropod (long-neck) footprint. **Right:** Irresponsible collectors have attempted to cut-out this footprint.



Left: Lignite (fossil wood) in situ in the beach platform. **Right:** Loose pieces of lignite.

In summary, Hanover Point is an easily accessible locality where a great many dinosaur footprints can be viewed. Fossil diversity is low, and other than fragments of wood and very scarce bone material there is little for the collector to take home. Fossil footprints should be left on the beach.

Protecting your finds

It's important to spend some time considering the best way to protect your finds onsite, in transit, on display and in storage. Prior to your visit, consider the equipment and accessories you're likely to need, as these will differ depending on the type of rock, terrain and prevailing weather conditions.



Left: Fossil wrapped in foam, ready for transport. **Right:** A small compartment box containing cotton wool is ideal for separating delicate specimens.

When you discover a fossil, examine the surrounding matrix (rock) and consider how best to remove the specimen without breaking it; patience and consideration are key. The aim of extraction is to remove the specimen with some of the matrix attached, as this will provide added protection during transit and future handling; sometimes breaks are unavoidable, but with care you should be able to extract most specimens intact. In the event of breakage, carefully gather all the pieces together, as in most cases repairs can be made at a later time...[continued](#).

A great family day out...



Left: Participants on various Discovering Fossils and Junior Geo fossil hunting events. **Right:** Families handle some real fossils at the event base.

Join us on an organised fossil hunt! Discovering Fossils and JuniorGeo have joined forces to provide a series of exciting prehistoric experiences for families and individuals of all ages and levels of knowledge. Our events include an introduction to the geology and fossils, followed by a group fossil hunt where everyone has an opportunity to find and collect a variety of fossils. To find out more [CLICK HERE](#).



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Safety notice: Fossil hunting can at times pose a risk to personal safety, in particular within environments close to the coast, cliffs or in quarries and when using the tools and equipment illustrated. Discovering Fossils provides a free resource to inform you about this fascinating subject and does not accept any liability for decisions made using this information. We recommend all individuals abide by the fossil hunting guidelines available by clicking on the icon at the top of the page.

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